

## February 20, 2009: Weekly Washington Update

This week I've been traveling throughout the First District during Congress' Presidents Day District Work Period. But, just because we're out of session, that doesn't mean that there hasn't been a lot going on. Monday, I held a press conference in Richmond announcing the reintroduction of my Chesapeake Bay Bill, on Thursday I joined many area residents to celebrate Black History Month, and I want to update you on the continuing digital television conversion.

I have spent the past 16 years, before entering Congress, as a shellfish specialist monitoring water quality and environmental health issues in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. To date the complexity of the participants and efforts in cleaning up the Bay has resulted in a muddled effort. So, I have reintroduced the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, H.R. 1053, in an effort to fundamentally alter the management of Chesapeake Bay restoration activities. This legislation would fully implement two cutting edge management techniques, crosscut budgeting and adaptive management, to enhance coordination, flexibility and efficiency of restoration efforts. Neither technique is currently required or fully utilized in the Bay restoration efforts, where results have lagged far behind the billions of dollars spent. Both methods required by this bill have been used successfully in complex restoration efforts in the Everglades, the Great Lakes and the California Bay Delta. By taking a couple pages out of their playbook, I think we will achieve substantial improvements in Chesapeake Bay restoration.

Next, I celebrated Black History Month with a visit to Gloucester's Holly Knoll, where I met with community leaders and toured the historic site with local historian Dr. Dorothy Cooke and over 100 members of the public. The event was organized by the Gloucester Institute, a non-profit organization headed by Kay Coles James, whose mission is to cultivate emerging leaders within the black community. Holly Knoll was the birthplace of the United Negro College Fund, and was also visited by Dr. Martin Luther King, who penned a portion of his famous "I Have a Dream" speech underneath the giant Oak tree at Holly Knoll. Holly Knoll is a true American treasure, and we are fortunate to have this historic site right here in the First District. The contributions to black history that took place at this home are incredible, and it was an honor to visit and celebrate Black History Month in such a significant setting.

Lastly, you may be aware that Congress has voted to delay the transition to digital broadcasting until June 12th. Some stations will be granted permission by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to stop broadcasting analog signals before this date. If you subscribe to cable service, the Digital Television (DTV) transition should not affect any TV sets that are connected to your cable services. The DTV transition applies only to full-power broadcast television stations - stations that use the public airwaves to transmit their programming to viewers through a broadcast antenna. Households with over-the-air analog-only televisions will no longer be able to receive full-power television service unless they either: (1) buy a digital-to-analog converter box to hook up to their analog television set; (2) acquire a digital television or an analog television equipped with a digital tuner; or (3) subscribe to cable, satellite, or telephone company television services, which will likely provide for the conversion of digital signals to their analog customers. A digital-to-analog converter box program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the Department of Commerce, will partially pay for consumer purchases of converter boxes. For more information on all of these developments, please visit <http://www.dtv.gov/> or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322). We are also working with the Federal Communications Commission on areas of the district that are not receiving adequate Digital Television. These areas are currently receiving very few if any television stations on their television. We will continue to work with the FCC to solve this problem.

I'm excited to get back to Washington this next week and set to work on two large bills which will manage funding for government agencies over the next fiscal year. As always, it's great to be back in the District and have the opportunity to interact with so many of you directly about the issues that are of concern to you and your communities. My staff and I welcome you to continue your important feedback on the goings-on in Washington and around the Nation. So, please don't hesitate to contact us if we can ever be of help to you or your families.

